

**TESTIMONY OF JENIFER O'NEAL
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET**

**THE COMMITTEE ON BUDGET, APPROPRIATIONS & FINANCE
35TH LEGISLATURE OF THE U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS
HONORABLE DONNA FRETT-GREGORY, CHAIRPERSON
MARCH 19, 2024
10:00 AM**

Good day Chairperson Donna Frett-Gregory, members of the Committee on Budget, Appropriations & Finance, other Senators of the 35th Legislature of the U.S. Virgin Islands, and members of the listening and viewing audience. I am Shanisa Emmanuel, Acting Associate Director of Budget Operations for the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

I appear on behalf of Ms. Jenifer C. O'Neal, Director of the Office of Management and Budget, and I will read her prepared statement which is pursuant to your invitation to provide testimony on Bill No. 35-0207, "An Act amending title 19 Virgin Islands Code, part I, adding chapter 6a to create the Territorial Chronic Kidney Disease and Diabetes Registry".

This legislation is crucial for addressing the growing health challenges posed by chronic kidney disease and diabetes in our community. By creating a registry, we can collect vital data to better understand the prevalence, risk factors, and outcomes associated with these conditions, ultimately leading to improved public health interventions and policies.

However, I must express my concerns regarding the appropriation of funds from this fiscal year's general fund for the implementation of the registry. Given the current financial constraints faced by our government, allocating funds without a clear budgetary plan is imprudent. It is essential to ensure that adequate resources are available to support the operational needs of the registry, including data collection,

analysis, and dissemination, without compromising other essential services or programs.

Moreover, without a dedicated funding source, there is a risk that the Territorial Chronic Kidney Disease and Diabetes Registry may struggle to fulfill its intended purpose effectively. Sustainable funding mechanisms must be identified to ensure the long-term viability and success of this initiative. I urge the legislature to explore alternative funding sources, such as federal grants or public-private partnerships, to support the ongoing operations of the registry. In the event that there are no alternative financial sources, and the General Fund appropriation is required, I implore the Legislature to consider the option of making the appropriation available until December 31, 2024, rather than making it available until expended.

In conclusion, while I fully support the establishment of the Territorial Chronic Kidney Disease and Diabetes Registry as a vital step towards addressing public health challenges in our community, I urge lawmakers to reconsider the appropriation of funds from this fiscal year's general fund without a sustainable budgetary plan. It is imperative to prioritize fiscal responsibility while ensuring the necessary resources are available to support the effective implementation and operation of the registry.

Madam Chair, thank you for the opportunity to give testimony on Bill 35-0207. I remain available to answer any questions that the members of this Body may have relative to the statement of Director O'Neal.